

Memorandum on Labor-Management Partnerships

October 28, 1999

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Reaffirmation of Executive Order 12871—Labor-Management Partnerships

When I became President, I believed that cooperation between Federal agencies and their unions could help create a Government that works better, costs less, and makes a positive difference in the lives of the American people. That is why I issued Executive Order 12871, Labor-Management Partnerships, and directed agencies to form partnerships with their unions; involve employees and union representatives as full partners in identifying and resolving workplace issues; provide training in consensual methods of dispute resolution; negotiate with unions over the subjects set forth in 5 U.S.C. 7106(b)(1); and evaluate bottom-line results achieved through partnership.

With your hard work and support, we have made great strides over the past 6 years. In many agencies, unions and management are working side by side on the tough challenges facing the Government and its employees. I am very proud of this success, but I am also convinced that we can do even more. I believe the time has come to redouble the Administration's efforts to create genuine labor-management partnerships. Therefore, I am taking new steps to reaffirm my strong commitment to partnership and to renew my call for agencies to work with their unions to achieve the important objectives of the Executive order.

First, I direct agencies to develop a plan with their unions at appropriate levels of recognition for implementing this memorandum and the Executive order. Every effort should be made to develop a plan that helps the agency and its employees deliver the highest quality service to the American people. Whenever possible, workplace issues should be resolved through consensus using interest-based problem-solving techniques.

Agencies should aggressively seek training, facilitation, and mediation assistance that can

help foster an environment where partnerships can succeed and thrive.

Second, agencies are directed to report to me, through the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), on the progress being made toward achieving the goals of this memorandum and the directives set forth in the Executive order. Reports must be submitted by April 14, 2000, and annually thereafter, and must be prepared with the involvement and input of the unions. Agencies shall describe the nature and extent of their efforts to comply with the Executive order and shall identify specific improvements in customer service, quality, productivity, efficiency, and quality of worklife that have been achieved as a result of partnership. These reports will not only help me assess our progress toward establishing successful partnerships, but will provide best practices that can assist unions and agencies in their efforts to develop effective partnership-building strategies. Finally, I am directing the Office of Personnel Management to analyze the information contained in these reports and, in coordination with OMB, to advise me on further steps that might be needed to ensure successful implementation of this memorandum and Executive Order 12871.

This memorandum is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to and does not create any right to administrative or judicial review, or any other right, substantive or procedural, enforceable by a party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

Proclamation 7245—National Adoption Month, 1999

October 28, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This month, as families across America look forward to the holiday season that is fast

approaching, we remember with special concern the thousands of children in our Nation who are growing up without the unconditional love and security of a permanent home. Our Nation's foster care system plays an invaluable role in providing temporary safe and caring homes to children who need them, but permanent homes and families are vital to giving these children the stability and sustained love they need to reach their full potential.

My Administration has worked hard to promote adoption by assisting adoptive families and breaking down barriers to adoption. We have helped remove many economic barriers to adoption by providing tax credits to families adopting children, and the Family and Medical Leave Act that I signed into law in 1993 gives workers job-protected leave to care for their newly adopted children. The Adoption and Safe Families Act I signed in 1997 reformed our Nation's child welfare system, made clear that the health and safety of children must be the paramount concern of State child welfare services, and expedited permanent placement for children. It also ensured health coverage for children with special needs and created new financial incentives for States to increase adoption. We also took important steps to help ensure that the adoption process remains free from discrimination and delays on the basis of race, culture, and ethnicity. We are now working to break down geographic barriers to adoption by using the Internet to link children in foster care to possible adoptive families.

We have new evidence that our efforts are bearing fruit: the first significant increase in adoptions since the National Foster Care Program was created almost 20 years ago. A new report from the Department of Health and Human Services shows that from 1996 to 1998, the number of adoptions nationwide rose 29 percent—from 28,000 to 36,000—and should meet our national goal of 56,000 adoptions by the year 2002. In addition, the First Lady and I were pleased to announce this past September the first-ever bonus awards to States that have increased the number of adoptions from the public foster care system. We also announced additional

grants to public and private organizations that remove barriers to adoption.

To follow through on this record of achievement, I have urged the Congress to safeguard the interests and well-being of young people who reach the age of 18 without being adopted or placed in a permanent home. Under the current system, Federal financial assistance for young people in foster care ends just as they are making the critical transition to independence. We must ensure that when these young people are old enough to leave the foster care system, they have the health care, life skills training, and educational opportunities they need to succeed personally and professionally.

As we observe National Adoption Month this year, we can take pride in our progress, but we know there is more work to be done. Let us take this opportunity to rededicate ourselves to meeting those challenges, and let us honor the many adoptive parents whose generosity and love have made such an extraordinary difference in the lives of thousands of our Nation's children.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 1999 as National Adoption Month. I urge all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs and activities to honor adoptive families and to participate in efforts to find permanent, loving homes for waiting children.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:31 a.m., October 29, 1999]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on November 1.

Radio Remarks on Emergency Agricultural Assistance

October 29, 1999

Today, as provided for in the agriculture appropriations bill I signed last week, I am designating \$8.8 billion in emergency assistance to our Nation's farmers and ranchers. This assistance will hasten payments to farmers who are recovering from the second year in a row of low commodity prices and crop and livestock losses from severe drought and flooding.

This is only a one-year temporary fix for the overall problems facing our farmers. They are the lifeblood of our land. Again I call on the Congress to enact a permanent fix to the severe shortcomings in the 1996 farm bill.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at approximately 6:20 p.m. on October 28 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 29. These remarks were also made available on the White House Press Office Actuality Line.

Remarks on Action To Preserve Privacy of Medical Records and an Exchange With Reporters

October 29, 1999

The President. Thank you, Secretary Shalala. I would like to thank you for all the work that you and so many people in your Department have done on this issue. I thank the representatives of the various groups who are here with me today for their concern for, and commitment to, the issue of medical records privacy. These health care and consumer advocates support what we are trying to do to protect the sanctity of medical records. I believe the American people will support us as well.

Every American has a right to know that his or her medical records are protected at all times from falling into the wrong hands. And yet, more and more of our medical records are stored electronically, and as they have been stored electronically the threats to our privacy have substantially increased.

So has the sense of vulnerability that so many millions of Americans feel.

To be sure, storing and transmitting medical records electronically is a remarkable application of information technology. Electronic records are not only cost effective; they can save lives by helping doctors to make quicker and better informed decisions, by helping to prevent dangerous drug interactions, by giving patients in rural areas the benefit of specialist care hundreds of miles away. So, on balance, this has been a blessing.

But as Secretary Shalala just said, our electronic medical records are not protected under Federal law. The American people are concerned and rightfully so. Two-thirds of adults say they don't trust that their medical records will be kept safe. They have good reason. Today, with the click of a mouse, personal health information can easily and now legally be passed around without patients' consent to people who aren't doctors, for reasons that have nothing to do with health care.

A recent survey showed that more than a third of all Fortune 500 companies check medical records before they hire or promote. One large employer in Pennsylvania had no trouble obtaining detailed information on the prescription drugs taken by its workers, easily discovering that one employee was HIV positive. This is wrong. Americans should never have to worry that their employers are looking at the medications they take or the ailments they've had.

In 1999 Americans should never have to worry about nightmare scenarios depicted in George Orwell's "1984." I am determined to put an end to such violations of privacy. That's why I'm honoring the pledge I made in the State of Union Address and using the full authority of this office to create the first comprehensive national standards for protection of medical records.

The new standards I propose would apply to all electronic medical records and to all health plans. They would greatly limit the release of private health information without consent. They would require health plans to inform patients about how medical information is used and to whom it is disclosed. They would give patients the right to see their own health files and to request corrections. They would require health plans and providers to